



How to Carve a Bird

Written By: Steve Tomashek



TOOLS:

- [Rubber Finger \(1\)](#)
- [carving knife \(1\)](#)
- [sandpaper, 220 grit \(1\)](#)



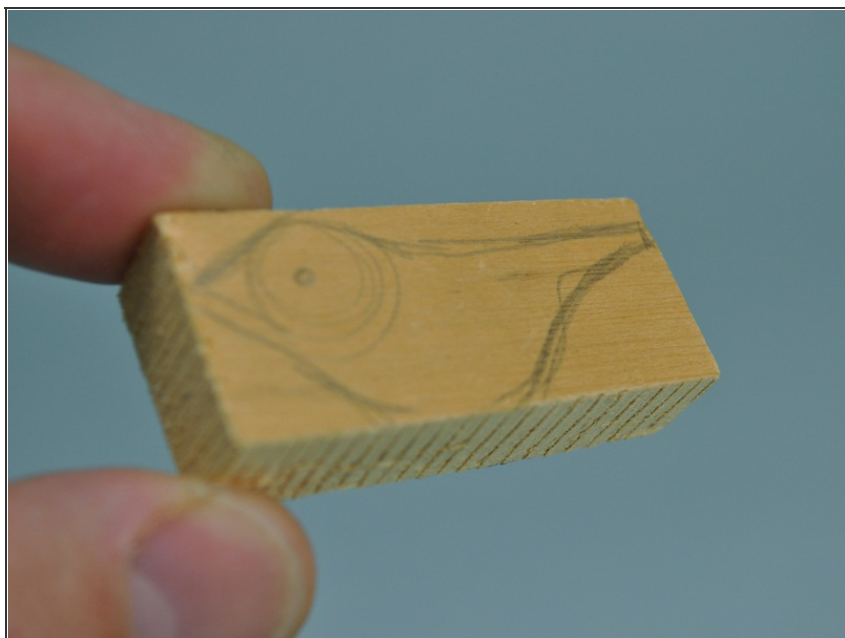
PARTS:

- [3" x 1" x 1/2" piece of Basswood \(1\)](#)

SUMMARY

There are carvers who have joined the ranks of the neurotic by trying to carve and then paint every feather on a bird. For me, the beauty of an object comes not from a literal reproduction but from the elegant ways in which complexity can be represented in simple forms. This project will help you realize this.


Step 1 — How to Carve a Bird



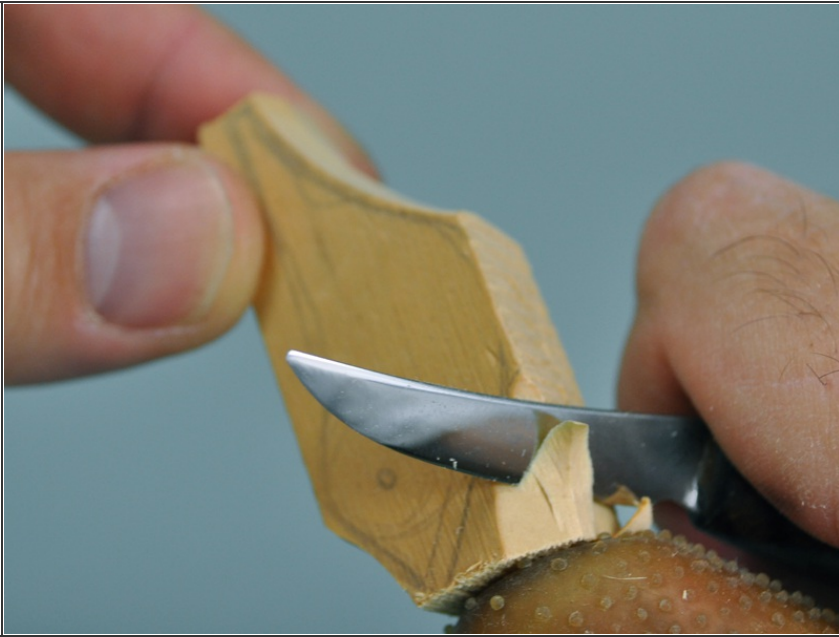
- Most any wood will do in a pinch; you may even find branches that work. The best thing to do however, is get a piece of dry wood with straight grain and no knots; I recommend Basswood. Here I'm using a piece of Yellow Cedar. It should be cut to an approximate 1:2:6 ratio as shown.

Step 2



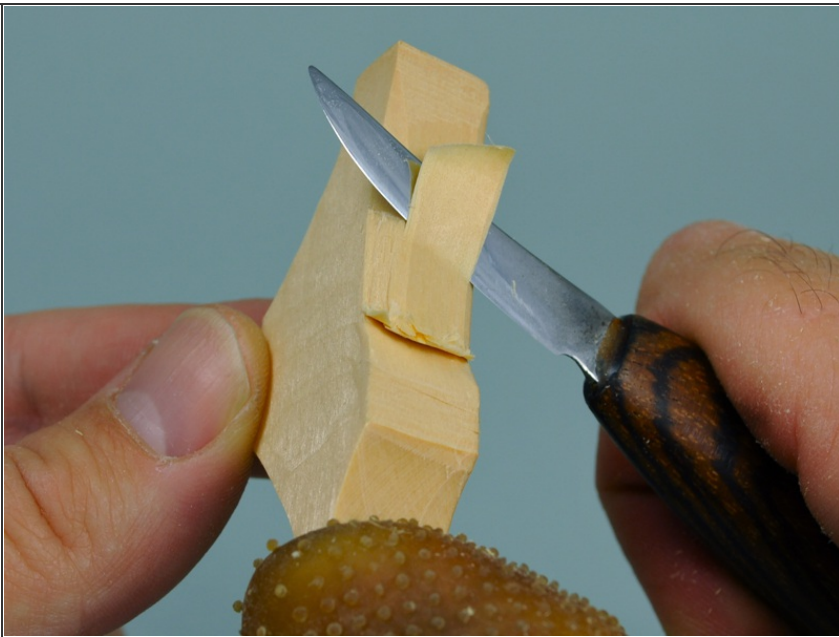
- First remove material from below the tail. Holding the wood firmly, brace your thumb and squeeze the knife into an edge. With each stroke of the knife shave off a little chip until you've whittled away the triangular-shaped chunk.
- Be sure to protect your thumb with a Rubber Finger  as shown.

Step 3



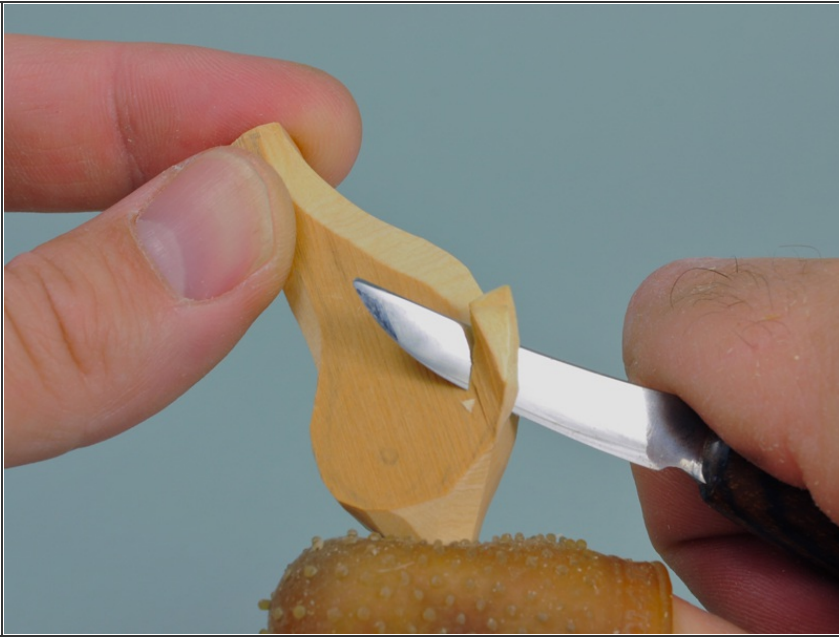
- Do the same to the front: carve wood from the top and bottom of the block until the form comes to a point where the beak will be. As you are whittling it will become more difficult because you are cutting off the grain at a greater angle.

Step 4



- Next you will remove the material from behind the head. Start by making a cut into the wood behind the head angled towards the tail. Follow this by shaving a piece from the tail towards this cut. This cut serves as the end point of the wood chips you remove and will keep you from cutting off parts of the head.

Step 5



- From here on out the basic shape of the bird is established and you need only trim away the angularity and bring a smooth roundness to the form. Keep in mind the direction of the grain as you carve and notice the ease with which you can slice into the wood in relation to that direction.

Step 6



- As you come close to completion pay special attention to the beak; distinguish it from the rest of the bird. Take time to observe your progress and make small cuts so as not to remove too much material.

Step 7



- You'll have to decide if you'd like to use sandpaper to smooth it, paint it in accordance with the pattern of a real bird and/or drill a hole in it to make it into an ornament. I decided to sand mine smooth, leave it unpainted but use a hot leather hole punch to burn in a rudimentary eye. It's mounted on a length of branch from an apple tree.

If you'd like to carve other animals I have a book available with over 20 step-by-step projects for the beginner along with basic information. The book, [Tiny Whittling](#), is available in stores and online. Ask for it at your favorite bookstore.

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